Lesson 8
The Voting Process

GUIDING QUESTIONS

❶ Is voting in elections important?

❷ Why do we vote by secret ballot?

❸ How do I vote in local elections?

OVERVIEW

The right to vote comes with the responsibility to vote in an informed and purposeful manner.

In this lesson, students analyze different reasons for voting in elections. Students review essential information about voter eligibility and when, where and how people vote in local elections. Afterwards, they practice voting and counting ballots through a mock vote. To consolidate their knowledge, students create a poster or pamphlet detailing how to vote or to encourage their family and friends to vote in the upcoming elections.

LEARNING INTENTIONS

We are learning to:

- analyze reasons for voting in elections;
- describe when, where and how to vote in local elections; and,
- use effective communication skills and persuasive language when trying to convince others.

Tips for Teachers

- Please use or adapt the activities in a way that is appropriate for your class.
- Show students a Student Vote ballot for your municipality or regional district so they know what to expect on Student Vote Day. Please refer to your ballot package.
- Be sensitive to issues at home that may challenge perspectives around voting and democratic participation, such as religion or traditions.
- Recognize and acknowledge barriers that inhibit individuals or groups from voting (e.g., negative history, socio-economic class, language, newcomers).

Supplies/Needs

- "Why Voting Matters" video
- Index cards for students
- Internet access
- Slide Deck 8
- Access or copies of 8.1
- All digital files, videos and slide decks can be found on the project website

Starter

Save the last word

1. Distribute one index card to each student. Introduce the activity by posing the following question: Does voting matter?

2. Watch the "Why Voting Matters" video and ask students to select one quote or reason for voting that stood out to them. They should write down the quote or reason on the index card. You may want to play the video twice in order to support this selection.

3. Ask students to explain why they chose the reason they did from the video by writing an explanation on the back of the card (e.g., what it meant to them, reminded them of, how it connects to prior learning).

4. Divide students into groups of three. Invite one student to read their chosen reason to rest of their group. Then ask the other two students to discuss the reason. What do they think it means? Why do they think these words might be important? After a few minutes, ask the student to read the back of their index card or to explain why they picked the reason. Repeat until each student has a turn.

Activities

1. Using Slide Deck 8, discover some of the key aspects of voting in local elections.

   - Why do we vote by secret ballot?
   - Who is able to vote in local elections?
   - Who organizes local elections in BC?
   - What are different ways a person can cast their ballot?
   - How do I mark my ballot?

2. Organize a mock vote with your class. You can use the ballot sample provided (Activity 8.1) or create your own ballots (physical or digital).

   a) Show students how to fill out a ballot correctly. It is important to demonstrate that there are sometimes different rules for different races. Students can use a checkmark, X, or any other mark as long as it clearly indicates their choice(s). Remind students that they must follow the rules for each race – if only two choices are permitted, you cannot vote for three candidates.

   b) Set-up a polling station with one voting screen and one ballot box in a location in your classroom.

   c) Distribute the ballots and invite each student to go behind the voting screen to mark their ballot. Afterwards, ask them to re-fold their ballot to ensure privacy and place it in the ballot box.

3. Review the ballot terms 'accepted' and 'rejected'.

   Accepted: A ballot that is clearly marked for the correct number of candidates (or less).

   Rejected: A ballot that cannot be counted because the choice was not clear or more options were selected than permitted.

4. Divide students into small groups and ask them to review and count a portion of the ballots from the mock vote. They should count one section (race) at a time. One person should show the ballot to the rest of the group and as a group, they should decide whether should be 'accepted' or 'rejected'. One person should be selected to tally the votes.

5. Add up the results from each group and announce the results.

6. Have a whole-class discussion and answer any remaining questions about the voting process.

   - Do you think voting is easy or challenging? Why?
   - Do you feel ready to vote in the Student Vote election? Why or why not?
   - What other questions do you have about voting?

Consolidation

Have students demonstrate their knowledge by creating a poster or pamphlet about how to vote or to encourage people to vote in the upcoming elections. It could be designed for a parent, guardian, or an adult they know to encourage participation in the elections. This could also be done in a digital poster format, or as a video.

Ideas for possible content:

- List the qualifications to vote in local elections;
- Describe different ways you can cast your ballot (when/how);
- List the steps to cast your ballot;
- Make a pitch with reasons for voting.

Co-create criteria with your class. Sample criteria for a poster/pamphlet is below.

- The tagline and/or graphics are used to capture interest.
- Headings are meaningful and appropriate
- Information is helpful or accurate (e.g., date, eligibility requirements)

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

LESSON SECTION	GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS
Starter	Can students identify a reason for voting that is meaningful to them and explain their choice? Are students actively listening? Can students analyze different reasons for voting?
Activities	Are students able to understand the reason for voting in private? Can students explain who is qualified to vote? Are students accurately casting a ballot? Can students evaluate an accepted ballot and tally the votes?
Consolidation	Can students communicate an accurate and informative voting pitch to family members or peers that demonstrates new knowledge?

ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

Individual Education Plans	**Modifications** • Provide students with terms and definitions in advance (e.g., secret ballot, voting location, general voting day, advance voting, rejected ballot). • Share the "Why Voting Matters" video before class discussions and activities. • Ensure that subtitles are on during videos. **Enrichment** • Activities — Have students conduct research into the roles of different election officials (see Election Manual) or design a plan for organizing Student Vote Day at your school.
Language Learners	• Provide students with terms and definitions in advance (e.g., secret ballot, voting location, general voting day, advance voting, rejected ballot). • Share the "Why Voting Matters" video before class discussions and activities. • Ensure that subtitles are on during videos.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	• Remind students that new immigrants, adults who have difficulty reading, language learners, persons who are homeless, newly arrived refugees, and other specific groups may face challenges understanding or accessing the voting process. • Keep the focus on ideas to increase access and the benefits our society gets from hearing different voices, not only on the disadvantages these groups face.
Accessibility & Accommodations	• If working in pairs or small groups in the classroom is not possible, consider using Google Docs for collaborative discussion/brainstorming.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

Every four years, voters across British Columbia decide who will represent their interests and lead their communities by electing the members of their municipal councils or regional district boards, school boards, parks boards or the Island Trust board.

The provincial government sets out common rules that all voters and candidates must follow. However, municipalities and regional districts are responsible for conducting the elections. Every municipality and regional district has a chief election officer who is in charge of running the election.

To be eligible to vote in the local government elections as a **resident or non-resident property elector**, you must:

- Be 18 years of age or older when you register to vote, or 18 years or older on general voting day;
- Be a Canadian citizen;
- Have been a resident of B. C. for at least six months before you register to vote;
- Have either lived or owned property in the jurisdiction in which they intend to vote for at least 30 days before you register to vote; and
- Not be disqualified under the *Local Government Act*, or any other enactment, or by law from voting in a local election.

To be eligible to vote in a school trustee election in British Columbia, you must:

- Qualify either as a resident elector or a non-resident property elector;
- Be registered or deemed to be registered as an elector of the trustee electoral area; and
- Not be disqualified under the School Act, or other enactment or law, from voting in the election.

A person is not permitted to vote more than once in a trustee election for any one school district. *The School Act* stipulates that a person may be the resident of only one trustee electoral area at a time, that being the area where the person lives, or if absent, where the person intends to return.

If you want to vote for the francophone education authority, you must be a member of the Conseil scolaire francophone (CSF) in addition to meeting the other requirements of a resident or non-resident property elector. You do not need to have a child in the school system to become a member of the CSF.

A local government must maintain and use its own list of electors if advance registration is available, unless it has adopted a by-law to implement same-day voter registration, or use the provincial voters list managed by Elections BC.

The local government-maintained **voters list** includes the names of resident electors and the names of non-resident property electors, whereas the provincial voters list only includes resident electors.

A resident elector is required to show two pieces of identification or sign a solemn declaration if their name does not already appear on the voters list. Non-resident property electors are required to register at the time of voting and show two pieces of identification, as well as the title of the property in relation to which they are voting. Contact your local government for more information about the voters list.

During the election period, you can find your voting place on your municipality or regional district website and through documentation mailed to voters.

Electors who are away, busy or unable to vote on voting day, have the option of participating in **advance voting**. One advance voting opportunity must be held 10 days prior to voting day. However, more advance voting days may be available. Please consult with your own municipality or regional district to find out how this works for your area.

Each municipality is responsible for conducting their election and determining the methods used. Options can include voting in person, by mail or through special voting opportunities held in hospitals, long-term care facilities or other locations where electors' mobility may be impaired. Please consult with your own municipality to find out how this works for your area.

Here are the basic steps to casting a ballot:

1. Once you confirm your eligibility, you are given a ballot.
2. Go behind a voting screen and mark your ballot.
3. Hand your folded ballot back to the voting clerk.
4. Your ballot is recorded and counted.

A **ballot** lists the names of the candidates running for each position in your local elections. There is a space beside each candidate's name on the ballot. You can mark your ballot with an X, shade the circle or use a checkmark. As long as you appropriately mark the ballot for your preferences and according to the number of choices, your votes will be counted.

Regarding the number of choices, if six council members are elected at large, you can vote for up to six candidates. Alternatively, if only one candidate is elected in a given race, you can only vote for one candidate. You can only vote for one type of school trustee (for your school district/electoral area, or for the francophone educational authority).

A **rejected ballot** is declared invalid by the voting officer because it was not properly marked. For example, the voter selected more than the number of candidates they were allowed to choose. In the case of local elections, one race or section may be declared valid and another may be deemed invalid.

A **spoiled ballot** is kept separate and never placed in the ballot box because it was mistakenly marked or torn and exchanged for a new ballot.